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A
TOKEN of RESPECT

TO THE

M E M O R Y

OF THE

Rev. George Whitefield, A. M.

By the Rev. Mr. VENN.

[Price SIX-PENCE.]

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[Price 3s. 6d.]

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TOKEN of RESPECT
TO THE
M E M O R Y
OF THE
Rev. George Whitefield, A. M.

BEING THE
SUBSTANCE of a SERMON

Preached on his Death, at the Right Hon.
the Countess of HUNTINGDON's Chapel
at BATH, the 18th of Nov. 1770.

K
By the Rev. Mr. V E N N. (*H.*)

—Through evil report, and good report.

L O N D O N:
Printed for E. and C. DILLY in the POULTRY.
MDCCLXX.

A

TOKEN OF RESPECT

W. Mayhew
M E M O R Y

OF THE

Rev. George Whitefield, A.M.

BEING THE

SUBSTANCE of a SERMON

Preached on his Death at the Right Hon.
the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel
at Bath, the 13th of Nov. 1770.



By the Rev. Mr. VERNER.

Printed by J. W. and J. B. in the Strand.

—Having sold report, and good report.

Printed by J. W. and J. B. in the Strand.

L O N D O N

Printed for E. and C. Bury in the Strand.

1770

ISAIAH, chap. viii. verse 18.

*Behold I, and the children whom the Lord
hath given me, are for signs and for wonders
in Israel; from the Lord of Hosts, which
dwelleth in mount Zion.*

IN the context, the Messiah, verse 13, is called the Lord of Hosts himself; but instead of being acknowledged as such, at his appearance, the Holy Ghost foretels he should be for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel. Under this general rejection and odium, the Messiah is represented in the text, as taking consolation in his spiritual seed. These he presents with himself, emphatically describing their peculiar character, so similar to his own, and their most near and dear relation to himself.

Behold I, and the children, &c.

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As the church of Christ derives her spiritual life from him, and is cherished with the same affection by him, as tender parents feel for their own offspring; he therefore distinguishes the members by the endearing appellation of his children. He puts also the highest honour upon them, whilst he presents them to the Father as given to him (*i. e.* in the everlasting covenant) to be redeemed by his blood. This truly illustrious part of the human race, he declares, are like himself, "for signs and wonders in Israel." These words denote any appearance which draws upon it the eyes of men, by being contrary to the course of nature; whilst it is, at the same time, a wonderful proof of God's good will towards men. Such an appearance, Christ and his apostles exhibited to the world, no less in their doctrine and life, than by their miracles: and though the ignorant and profane brand believers at this day with enthusiastic presumption for ranking with the apostles, yet the Holy Ghost comprehends the whole church militant in the very same terms; because the very same character, the same spiritual relation to Christ, the same kind of singularity, though it may differ much in degree, must ever distinguish the children of Christ. Amongst the nominal professors of his faith, they must pass for signs and wonders.

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It is an affecting event which leads my thoughts to this subject. A very eminent sign and wonder, well known and much beloved amongst us, we hear, has finished his course: I mean the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. It will be soothing therefore to our grief for so great a loss, and I trust, profitable to our souls, in treating upon the text, to point out the singularity which makes the children of Christ, signs and wonders in the world—to ascertain the sole cause which produces and sustains this wonderful singularity—to bring to your remembrance the very remarkable particulars which distinguished the late Rev. Mr. Whitefield, amongst the signs and wonders which God hath raised up.

It is the doctrine, then, of the children of Christ, which makes them signs and wonders in the world. This is peculiar to themselves. For they know and avow the divinity of Christ's person; the perfection of his atonements; the heart-felt remission of sins, thro' faith in his blood; the imputation of his righteousness, and the unchangeableness of his love. They know and avow, that he gives liberty, and consolation, and power, and the earnest of the eternal inheritance to sinners who call upon him, and believe on his name. This is, in substance, the doctrine which distinguishes Christ from all
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other teachers in the world: and the knowledge, and open profession of this doctrine, distinguishes his children from all other people in the world. It is this doctrine also that attracts the attention of men, as a strange and unaccountable appearance: "for the things of the Spirit of God, are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Christ himself, for teaching this doctrine, (see the vi, viii, and x. chapters of St. John's gospel) was reviled as a fool, a madman, a devil. Whilst some were struck with wonder at his words, and said, "Never man spake like this man," and many believed on him. This doctrine, in every age and place, must be for a sign and wonder, because it eclipses all man's excellency; pours contempt upon what his vanity would boast itself in. Therefore, till human nature ceases to exalt itself, the doctrine known and avowed by the children of Christ alone, must make them pass for signs and wonders.

Still they are a token of God's good-will to men; and the expression of their being for signs and wonders, it was observed, imports this. That the ministry of Christ and his apostles, was such a token, few will dare to deny. It is as true of every member of his body, to the end of time; because every
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living member of Christ's church, is both himself an instance of the grace of God, and holds forth to others the word of life. The children of Christ alone maintain, that there is full relief in him, for all the depths of misery into which we are fallen; that in the fulness of his love (the communications of which are the same forever to his church) there is *now* to be enjoyed a good which is above all the evil in the world, or in the heart of man---a well-spring inexhaustible of grace, mercy, and peace. What greater token of God's good will to men can be conceived, than such *witnesses* of the intercourse he still maintains, with polluted, fallen creatures? and of all the spiritual blessings in heavenly things, wherewith God blesses the children of Christ?

But this grand peculiarity in doctrine produces also a striking singularity of life, which makes the children of Christ appear still more as signs and wonders in the world: because his doctrine revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, has in it a certainty, a force, a beauty, of a transforming efficacy. Like the influences of the sun, air, and rain upon the earth, divine teaching produces holiness. Indeed superficial and prejudiced observers, impiously charge the doctrines of Christ with giving licence to do evil. In
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their idea, justification by faith only, knowledge of salvation, imputed righteousness, and election to eternal glory, encourage disobedience to God. On the contrary, these truths are, in scripture, constantly urged as the grand means of sanctification; and hypocrites, however confident, are confronted by positive declarations which would lose all their force, but upon the supposition, that the doctrines of grace are indeed the certain means of sanctification, where they dwell in the heart. For it is declared, that if any man say, "I know him," (the Lord Jesus) "and keep not his commandments, he is " a liar, and the truth is not in him."

A striking singularity of life, therefore, is indisputably connected with unfeigned belief of the truth. Hence the children of Christ are the signs and wonders to the world in their practice. They are strange and unaccountable in the motive, substance, and end of their life,---for they act from love. The complexion of their religion, and its substance, are entire devotedness to the Redeemer: and their end is not their own honour, or their own reward, but the glory of his beloved name. Hence they are perpetually longing to be found more zealous, and more faithful in his service. But however zealous and faithful, rejecting, with abhorrence, a thought on that account,
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of self-preference, or self-complacency. They are quite singular in a restless zeal to save their fellow-creatures from the ruinous errors of Pharisaism, and Sadducism. The whole drift of their life, like the Baptist's voice, is a continual cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Their sweetest joy, their constant gratification springs from meditating on his glory, reading the infallible record of his mighty deeds, conversing upon the numberless instances of his tender love, incessant care, and faithfulness towards his flock—in employing their influence over relations, friends, dependants, acquaintance, and neighbours; if, haply, they may be instrumental in bringing some to the knowledge of their Lord.

Such a life is as strange and wonderful as the doctrine of Christ. And though this wonderful singularity be neither weak, nor wild—though it be built upon the surest foundation—though it be agreeable to the most enlightened reason—though it be most beneficial to man, most pleasing to God, and no other than an imitation of Christ and his Apostles; yet, like their life, it is disgusting, it is insufferable to the world. They will be sure, therefore, to impute it to some odious, or lamentable cause. Whenever these signs and wonders make their appearance, "they are men," say the world,

world, "of weak and heated imaginations"—or, "they are puffed up with spiritual pride to affect such singularity"—or, "they act from the most enormous villainy, which can dare the vengeance of God, an intention to get money by a cloke of superior sanctity."

In answer to these slanders, ever circulated with a degree of frequency, confidence, and malice, proportioned to the excellency of Christ's children: in answer, I say, to all these slanders, the text expressly assigns the cause, which gives birth and maintenance, to this appearance. These signs and wonders are from the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth in Zion, in his Church. They are born, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And being born of God, they overcome the world. Hence they are intrepid in cleaving to Christ—they have taken their side, they have counted the cost—they are deeply thankful for the choice they have been divinely led to make—they say, "If we are beside ourselves, it is unto God; or, if we be sober, it is for the sake of the souls of men, to do them good. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all that they who
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“ live (by his death) should not live unto
 “ themselves; but unto him that died for
 “ them, and rose again.”

That the Lord of Hosts himself is the sole cause of this appearance, which is a sign and a wonder in the world, is evident from the subjects on whom the marvellous change is wrought, as well as from scripture assertions. For some, out of the circles of the most gay and volatile, others, from amongst the vainest and fondest of admiration; some of the most wise, in their own eyes, and the most confident in their own virtue; others of the most stupidly ignorant, or of the most abandoned to all that is detestable, as well as some of the most highly esteemed among men: from each of these various, and opposite classes of characters, multitudes do come forth, who are for signs and wonders in Israel.

Ask them, and they will answer for themselves. Ask them, and they will each give a clear, distinct account, by what means they became, in the judgment of the world, so strange and unaccountable. They will tell you how thoughtfulness, a sense of guilt and fear of being lost, came upon them; from which they strove to escape, but could not—They

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will tell you, that sickness, or affliction, or reading in some book the truth, or hearing it from the lips of some friend, or minister, took away the scales from their eyes. That from that time, they began to see, to understand, to feel the truths of God, in a manner utterly unknown to them before. From that time, they will tell you they have possessed such a living proof of the certainty of the despised doctrine of Christ, that no disputings of men could darken it, no authority overawe them from embracing it; no ridicule, or threats of the world, make them dissemble it.

Hence they begin, continue, and finish their course. Facts, like these, prove the work is of God, and that each individual member of Christ's church, like his kingdom upon earth, is a stone cut out without hands; since no cause, in any degree equal to the effect, beneath that of the power of the Lord of Hosts, can be reasonably assigned. No cause why the young and giddy should, all on a sudden, become deeply serious, and so remain all their days; though uneducated in religious principles, and, before, utterly thoughtless. No cause why dutiful children, whose very life was in their parents smile, should venture to incur their unrighteous anger by being

being deemed offensively religious. No cause why the most meek and yielding should become inflexible for the faith—why the Pharisee should make, from his heart, the publican's confession—why scholars should become fools in their own eyes—Deists should cry out to Jesus, my Lord and my God, and the most infectious of abandoned sinners, become examples in every holy temper.

If every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights (and to deny this is to rob God of his glory) from whence, but from his own power, can proceed a total revolution in the mind of man—a change from all that is evil, to the love and pursuit of all that is good? Does not the world hate this change? Does not Satan seek to prevent, and to destroy it? Do not the inclinations of the human heart lead in a contrary path? What other cause, then, can possibly produce this change, but that which the text points out? These signs and wonders are from the Lord of Hosts himself, that dwelleth in Sion.

But though the children of Christ are all for signs and wonders in Israel, yet do they differ as one star differs from another star in glory. Talents, grace, and zeal, eminently dignify some, and draw the eyes

of men upon them. In the foremost of this rank, doubtless, is the Rev. Mr. Whitefield to be placed. For his doctrine was the doctrine of the Reformers, of the Apostles, and of Christ: It was the doctrine of free grace, of God's everlasting love. Through Jesus he preached the forgiveness of sins, and perseverance in holy living, through his faithfulness and power engaged to his people. And the doctrine which he preached, he eminently adorned by his zeal, and by his works. For if the greatness, extent, success, and disinterestedness of a man's labour can give him distinction amongst the children of Christ; we are warranted to affirm, that scarce any one of his ministers, since the Apostles days, has exceeded, scarce any one has equalled Mr. Whitefield.

What a sign and wonder was this Man of God in the greatness of his labours! One cannot but stand amazed that his mortal frame could, for the space of near thirty years, without interruption, sustain the weight of them. For what is so trying to the human frame, in youth especially, as long-continued, frequent, and violent straining of the lungs? Who, that knows their structure, would think it possible, that a person, little above the age of manhood, should speak in the compass of a single week, (and that for years) in general,
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forty hours, and in very many weeks, sixty, and that to thousands; and after this labour, instead of taking any rest, should be offering up prayers, intercessions, with hymns and spiritual songs, as his manner was, in every house to which he was invited? The history of the church of Christ affords but very few instances of men thus incessantly employing their whole strength, and, as it were, every breath they drew, in the business of their sacred function. And the truth is, that, in point of labour, this extraordinary servant of God did as much in a few weeks, as most of those who exert themselves, are able to do in the space of a year. Thus labouring, not by fits and starts, but with constancy, and perseverance, and ardour unabated; his mortal frame, about nine years since, began to sink under the weight of so much work. If, with the length and frequency of Mr. Whitefield's preaching, we consider the intenseness of voice and spirit with which he spoke, the greatness of his labours will appear perfectly astonishing. He knew not how to speak with less zeal, in his whole manner, than became the subjects of his discourse. The total ruin of the human race by the fall; the complete recovery of believers in Christ; his dying love, and the unsearchable riches of his grace, to be known experimentally in this life, tho' fully to be displayed

displayed in the next; and the infatuation of sinners, led captive by their lusts, down to the chambers of death: these grand truths, of more weight than words can paint, fired his whole soul; they transported him as much as earthly spirits are transported into vehemence, when they contend personally for their own property. He cried out therefore, as his dear Lord was wont to do, with a voice audible to an amazing distance! Hence, in a thousand instances, where the cause of God more coolly pleaded would have been neglected, he gained it a hearing, and carried the day: for the unusual earnestness of the speaker roused the most stupid and lethargic. It compelled them to feel the matter must be momentous indeed, which the preacher was urging as a man would plead for his own life. Early and often his body suffered for this very violent exertion of his strength;---early and often his inside has bled a considerable quantity, and cried out, "Spare thyself." But, prodigal of life, in the best of causes, he would give himself no rest; expecting very soon to finish his course, and infinitely desirous to save the souls condemned to die, he persisted. Tho' this may be blamed as an excess, it was an excess far above the reach of a selfish mind, or an ordinary faith.

Equal to the greatness and intenseness of
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his labours, was their extent. The abilities and grace of most teachers, have full employ in a small district; nor have common men talents for more. But when God lights up in the breast an apostolic zeal for his own glory, an apostolic love for the souls of men, it seems reasonable to conclude, such an instrument is designed for the most extensive usefulness.

Accordingly the compass of Mr. Whitefield's labours, exceeds any thing that others can pretend to. Not only in the South, the West, and North of England, did he lift up his voice, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is come:" but in Wales, in Scotland, in Ireland, and America, from Georgia to Boston, vast multitudes in each country were witnesses of his zeal for the salvation of souls.

And to crown all, he was abundantly successful in his vast labours, and disinterested too. The seals to his ministry, from first to last, I am persuaded, are more than would be credited, could the number be fixed. This is certain, his amazing popularity was only from his usefulness; for he no sooner opened his mouth as a preacher, than God commanded an extraordinary blessing upon his word. The people were so deeply impressed with the sense of divine things

things from what he delivered, that, to his own great surprize, they followed him from church to church, until the largest churches in London could no longer contain a fourth part of the crowds, which pressed to hear the word of God from his lips.

Should any one say, few in comparison, besides the low, ignorant, common people, were his followers; I would answer, the souls of the poor and ignorant, are to the full as precious as those of the rich and learned: and the mob have shewn the justest discernment, and have received the truth; whilst men of wealth, and learning, and education, have trampled it under their feet. Witness the chief Scribes and Pharisees, who rejected both the Baptist and the Saviour, when the common people justified God, and gave them both the honour of being sent from him. Indeed in every age, we see the scripture fulfilled, *not many rich, not many mighty, not many wise men after the flesh, are called; but God hath chosen the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.*

However, when the fierceness of prejudice was worn off, numbers, who at first despised him, taught to do so by gross slanders, were happy under his ministry. And this honour was put upon him even to the last. He had a much larger audience statedly to
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hear him, than any man in the whole kingdom, perhaps in all Christendom.

And that this vast multitude of people were gathered, just as the primitive churches of Christ, by the truth they heard, and the spiritual benefit they received under his word, is evident beyond a reasonable doubt. For if you trace his progress thro' the various cities and countries where he preached the gospel, you will find, as the case was with St. Paul, so it was with this servant of Christ, many were turned by him from darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God, receiving remission of their sins, and an inheritance among those that are sanctified, thro' faith in Christ. Enquire of the effects of his labours from the only proper judges, those who live in the religious world, and they will aver, that many within their own knowledge, small as that circle must be, confess they owe their own selves to this faithful witness for his Lord.—Add to this, that the letters he received of grateful acknowledgement from persons of all ages and conditions in life, for the spiritual blessings he had conveyed to them, would fill whole volumes. Nay, it is a well known fact, that the conversion of men's souls has been the fruit of a single sermon from his lips; so eminently was he made of God, a fisher of men.

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But he was not more successful, than he was disinterested in his labours; for tho' a vast multitude (which must ever be the case with those whom God is pleased remarkably to own) followed him, he had still no ambition to stand as the head of a party. His great object was to exalt Christ crucified; and when his hearers were brought to the knowledge of salvation, his point was gained, and his soul was satisfied. Hence, neither in his sermons, nor more private exhortations, did he cast disparaging reflexions upon other preachers of Christ; neither did he urge rules of his own devising, as necessary helps to godly living, laying a vast stress upon them, as self-love will dictate. No base suggestion dropt from his mouth, as if to differ from him must be owing to blindness in the judgement, or coldness of the heart for the interests of holiness. Truly cordial and catholic in his love, for all who appeared to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; he never desired to see his congregation encreased by those who had evangelical pastors of their own. Further, in proof of his disinterestedness, consider what he gained by his labours.—The scourge of the tongue was let loose upon him, and his name was loaded with the foulest calumnies; he was often in tumults, and more than once in danger of his life, by the rage of the people; he wore himself away in the service of souls; and when

when he died, he died quite exhausted by much speaking ; but in his death he received an immediate answer to his own prayer, that if it were consistent with the divine will, he might finish that day his Master's work.

For such a life and such a death, (tho' in tears under our great loss) we must yet thank God. And tho' we are allowed to sorrow, because we shall never see or hear him again, we must rejoice that millions have heard him so long, so often, and to such good effect ; that out of this mass of people, multitudes are gone before him, we doubt not, to hail his entrance into the world of glory ; and that in every period of life, from childhood to hoary age, many of his children in the Lord are still to follow ; all to be his crown of rejoicing ; the only effectual everlasting confutation of his adversaries, that he run not in vain, nor laboured in vain.

Whatever good, therefore, we have received, any of us, from his ministry, and sure much good we have received, (for my own part, I should be basely ungrateful, was I not to love his name, whom I never heard preach without benefit)---whatever soft affections we therefore feel in paying this debt of respect to his memory, may they be improved to some lasting and glorious purpose. And this will be done, if we are careful to maintain

tain the doctrine of Christ, with a godly jealousy, in this day of general apostasy from the faith, once delivered to the saints---if in heart and life we be given up to the service of Christ---if we reprove, rebuke, and bless mankind by the excellent singularity of our example. So shall we, in our day, be for signs and wonders in Israel, the highest distinction a mortal can be cloathed with: and in the universal assembly of men and angels, we shall stand in that chosen company, at the head of which, Jesus, presenting himself as their Saviour, will say, *Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me.*



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